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"I take myself bound to charge no man to be of a religion which he denieth."

BAXTER.

This work, of which the prospectus was announced in the 43d Number of this Magazine, has been since published in London; and we can strongly recommend it to the perusal of those, who wish to have a moderate, dispassionate view of

Catholic doctrines, by one, who although not embracing them, is desirous of giving an impartial account, on the broad comprehensive principle of allowing others to think, and fairly representing opinions, even when they are in opposition to his own.

The writer in his preface gives a summary account of his views in writing the present work. The following extracts will introduce him favourably to our readers.

“Sincerely devoted to the great cause of Catholic emancipation, yet zealously attached to the religion of Protestants, I hesitated for some time on the propriety and usefulness of publishing the result of my inquiries concerning the faith and worship of Roman Catholics. To encounter the prejudices and mistakes of my friends, and my enemies, if I have any, by taking, what some will call, a favourable view of the Church of Rome, presented no contemptible obstacle to my mind. Yet, convinced that hitherto no Protestant writer has done full justice to the subject, I was not willing to forego the pleasure of, at least, endeavouring to show, that the religion of our ancestors has been mistaken, and that unworthy and groundless alarms are excited in consequence of that mistake. Some of my friends, themselves favourably inclined towards the claims of Catholics, had their fears, that if I drew a true portrait of the Catholic Church, so far from serving, I should considerably injure the cause of toleration and religious liberty. This objection would most assuredly have effectually put an end to the whole undertaking, had I not been fully convinced of its futility. I have only to request the reader to observe the exact purport of my title-page, and he will then bear in mind, that this work professes to give a view of the Roman Catholic RELIGION, and not of Roman Catholic Courts—not even exactly of the Court of Rome itself. This attention will remove much ground of complaint, as many I know will complain, that I have omitted to notice this plot and that massacre, this notion and that practice, the conduct of this priest and of that prelate. When murders, and seditions, and plots, and persecutions, are adduced against Roman Catholics, it is sufficient to give this one plain and obvious answer:—They are acts which form no part of the Roman Catholic RELIGION; and I, of course, had, comparatively speak-

ing, nothing to do with them: the records of them may serve to amuse those persons who have no better argument in support of that system of intolerance, which has been so long exercised against the Roman Catholics of this country and of Ireland:—the character, the liberties, and the faith of our present Catholics, such arguments do not, or ought not to, affect.

“There are no words in which I can sufficiently express my sense of the great openness and unreserved readiness with which the clergy and the laity of the Roman Catholic Church have made their communications to me, whenever I have applied to them for information. If I stood in need of any inducement to think favourably of the good sense and candour of these insulted people, I should find it in that frankness and generosity, which every where, except in one solitary instance, have been exercised towards me. When I first suggested to them the plan and design of this work, I was a perfect stranger, otherwise than as I might be known through the medium of my former publications; but they all earnestly urged me to undertake it, and to form my account of their Church and tenets from their own formularies, and writings of acknowledged authority among them, and not from the publications of their adversaries. They, moreover, advised me to distinguish between the Articles of their Faith, and the opinions of individuals. With these intimations, and this advice, seconded by the greatest condescension and goodness in procuring me such books as lay in their power to supply me with, they left me to my own impressions, without, in the most distant or slight degree, attempting to influence me in my inferences or conclusions.

“In this instance, almost every page has been committed to press with fear and trembling, lest I should injure, through my mistakes, rather than promote by the faithfulness of my representations, a cause in which I feel a deep and serious interest—*The Emancipation of Roman Catholics; and the repeal of all those disgraceful penal statutes, which aggrieve and oppress the Dissenters of this great and enlightened Empire.*”

In general the writer makes good his promises, and furnishes a work, which will be read with interest by the friends of religious liberty, which may not prove uninteresting, even to Catholics; and which, if

Protestants who have honest fears, could be induced to read, they might find much to abate their prejudices. They only, who are political bigots though assuming the mask of religion to cloak their intolerant, interested motives, and who oppose Catholic rights, that they may retain their unjust monopoly, and their unfounded claims to exclusive loyalty, may be expected to turn from these pages with disgust. It would be pleasing to see this book generally read in the present crisis ; and we hope the demand for it will induce our booksellers to import it. Let our readers judge as by a sample what they may expect from the following extract.

" But still it will be asked, that admitting the fact, that the Catholic religion does not teach persecution, nor hold the tenet that no faith is to be kept with heretics, yet is there not a stronger bias in the spirit and discipline of that church to persecution, than is found in any other ? Detach that church from the state, and I reply, there is not. I have mixed and associated with Catholics, and I can assert, without dread of contradiction, that I have found as much liberality of sentiment, as enlarged and as liberal a freedom, and as great a spirit of toleration and Christian forbearance, as among other Christians holding the same general doctrines. It is true, they tell us, that future salvation is promised only to believers, by which, I am well aware, they mean believers of their own description. But I should be glad to know how many denominations of Christians we can find that do not hold a similar opinion. Does not the Church of England tell us, that if we would be saved, we must believe the creed of St. Athanasius ? Will any Calvinist, consistent with his principles, tell us that we may be saved whether we believe his doctrines or not ? Nay, have not even the modest and liberal Quakers their line of distinction ?—their disownments and their censures, and that on account of heresy, whether real or imaginary ? The truth of the whole matter is this, and thus we all reason : " Whosoever would be saved, it is necessary to be of the true Church : *we* are the true Church ; therefore, whosoever would be saved, must be of our Church." We may wrangle for ever about the exclusive spirit and the narrow bounds of popery ; but, after all, it comes to this, even among most Protestants, that there is no salvation apart from *us* : " The Temple of the Lord are

we." We all environ ourselves in a fortress of *fundamentals*, *essentials*, *indispensable articles*, and a thousand fancies of our own, and then call ourselves THE CHURCH ! We become so many infallible bodies, and deal out our sentences of everlasting damnation with as much grace and ease as if we were distributing the bounties of a kind Providence. But it does not therefore follow, that any of us would persecute another to death, merely because we think him in a dangerous error. The times of open persecution, I trust, are for ever past. Had Luther lived in our day, he would not have indulged narrow and selfish views : had Calvin now to deal with even Servetus, he would not resort to the argument of fire : had Socinus now to reason with Davidus, he would not thrust him into prison for not praying to a being whom he believed to be a mere man ; and were the Catholics now restored to their former power, I feel confident they would not resort to the same violent measures which at one time so dreadfully disgraced them, and for which they now so severely suffer. The shameful disabilities under which Catholics and Dissenters still labour, will soon be removed—the voice of truth, of justice, and humanity, must and will be heard. These disabilities are supported, not by the genius of Protestantism, for the principles of our separation from the Church of Rome are at variance with all those arguments which are urged by an interested faction for a continuance of that system of intolerance which is so pertinaciously pursued against the just claims of the Irish Catholics. It is not a system wholly of a religious character—the men who persist in opposing the claims of Catholics and Dissenters, I am persuaded, care little about the religion of either. The system is a political one ; they know that those persons, Catholics and others, who now feel themselves injured and insulted, on account of their religious opinions, are the friends of civil liberty,—the enemies of interminable war, and courtly corruption ; they know, that by enfranchising them in religious matters, they would at the same time be adding to their political influence, which, more than their faith, they dread. No men would be more tolerant in matters of religion than the " No Popery" men, if they did not fear, that the consequences of granting religious liberty, would be injurious to that line of politics which they think fit to pursue." K.